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PAGE 01 BUENOS 04726 01 OF 02 192009Z
ACTION SCT-03

RELEASED IN FULL

INFO LOG-00	ACDA-17	ACDE-00	AID-01	ARA-01	A-01	CA-02
CCO-00	CG-00	CIAE-00	SMEC-00	COME-00	CTME-00	OASY-00
DODE-00	DOEE-00	DOTE-00	DS-00	EB-01	FBIE-00	FBO-01
H-01	IMMC-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	INSE-00	JUSE-00	LAB-01
L-01	ADS-00	M-00	NEA-01	NRCE-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00
OCS-06	OIS-01	OMB-01	OPR-01	PA-01	PM-00	PRS-01
P-01	SNP-00	SP-00	SR-00	SSO-00	SS-00	TRSE-00
T-00	USIE-00	USSS-00	ASDS-01	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-09
G-00	/054W					

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R 192012Z JUL 94
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1049
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
FAA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM//SCCC//
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BUENOS AIRES 004726

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, PTER, ASEC, AR
SUBJECT: FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AMIA BOMBING IN
- BUENOS AIRES

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PAGE 02 BUENOS 04726 01 OF 02 192009Z

REF: A) BUENOS AIRES 4711; B) BUENOS AIRES 4694; C)
BUENOS AIRES 4685.

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT

SUMMARY

2. POLICE, FIRE AND RESCUE SQUADS WORKED THROUGH THE
NIGHT OF JULY 18-19 AT THE SITE OF THE BOMBING OF

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ARGENTINA'S JEWISH MUTUAL ASSOCIATION (AMIA) IN BUENOS AIRES. THE ATTACK HAS BEEN CONDEMNED BY VIRTUALLY EVERY SECTOR OF ARGENTINE SOCIETY. BUENOS AIRES'S MORNING PRESS PUTS THE NUMBER OF DEATHS AT 26 AND INJURED AT 146, WHILE FEDERAL POLICE SOURCES HAVE TOLD US THAT, AS OF NOON JULY 19, THEIR BEST ESTIMATE IS 17 DEAD (11 UNIDENTIFIED) AND 164 WITH VARYING DEGREES OF INJURIES. A U.S. INTER-AGENCY TEAM ARRIVES JULY 20 TO ASSIST LOCAL INVESTIGATORS; AN OFFICIAL ISRAELI TEAM IS EXPECTED JULY 19. HEIGHTENED SECURITY MEASURES REMAIN IN PLACE FOR USG INSTALLATIONS AND PERSONS IN BUENOS AIRES. END SUMMARY.

RESCUE WORK CONTINUES

3. AFTER AN INITIAL PERIOD OF SHOCK AND CONFUSION ON MONDAY MORNING, THE AMIA BOMBING SITE CAME UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE ARGENTINE FEDERAL POLICE. THE MEDIA ESTIMATES THAT SOME 2,500 PERSONS, INCLUDING POLICE,
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PAGE 03 BUENOS 04726 01 OF 02 192009Z
FIRE SQUADS, CIVIL DEFENSE TEAMS, AND VOLUNTEERS -- MANY FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD -- WERE INVOLVED IN TRYING TO PULL BODIES FROM THE TWISTED WRECKAGE OF THE AMIA BUILDING AND REMOVE RUBBLE TO ALLOW FURTHER ACCESS TO POSSIBLE VICTIMS BURIED DEEP WITHIN THE RUINS. INFORMAL ESTIMATES AS TO THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN IN THE BUILDING AT THE TIME OF THE BLAST HAVE RISEN TO BETWEEN 100 AND 120. ALTHOUGH THE FEDERAL POLICE HAS GIVEN US A LIST OF 17 DEAD AND 164 INJURED, THERE IS STILL A FAIRLY LARGE NUMBER OF MISSING WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN IN THE AMIA BUILDING AT THE TIME OF THE BOMBING. MONDAY EVENING THE DAMAGED BUILDING SUFFERED A FURTHER COLLAPSE, TRAPPING AND INJURING SEVERAL FIREMEN. WATER FROM BROKEN MAINS FLOODED THE BUILDING'S BASEMENT, TRAPPING SEVERAL PEOPLE WHOM RESCUERS ARE STILL TRYING TO REACH.

SOURCE OF THE BLAST

4. THE JULY 19 MEDIA REPORTS A QUESTIONABLE HYPOTHESIS, ALLEGEDLY ORIGINATING WITH THE FEDERAL POLICE, THAT THE BLAST CAME FROM INSIDE THE AMIA BUILDING, PERHAPS FROM THE BASEMENT. THE BUILDING,

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HOWEVER, HAS BEEN UNDER VERY STRICT INTERNAL SECURITY SINCE THE BOMBING OF THE ISRAELI EMBASSY IN MARCH OF 1992. THE SECURITY MEASURES DESCRIBED FOR BA DAILY "CLARIN" BY A FORMER AMIA EMPLOYEE PARALLEL THOSE WHICH THE EMBASSY ROUTINELY EMPLOYS. MOREOVER, ACCORDING TO THE "CLARIN" ARTICLE, IN ADDITION TO THREE FEDERAL POLICE ROUTINELY POSTED IN THE BUILDING,

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PAGE 04 BUENOS 04726 01 OF 02 192009Z
AMIA AND ITS PARENT ORGANIZATION DAIA HAD THEIR OWN SECURITY PEOPLE, REPORTEDLY ASSISTED BY ISRAELI EXPERTS. THE INTERNAL HYPOTHESIS APPARENTLY DERIVES FROM THE TESTIMONY OF THE TWO POLICEMEN WHO WERE IN CHARGE OF EXTERNAL SECURITY AT THE TIME OF THE BOMBING. BOTH WERE INJURED AS THEY SAT IN THEIR CRUISER JUST TWO DOORS AWAY FROM THE AMIA BUILDING. THEY TOLD INTERVIEWERS THAT THEY FELT A STRONG UNDERGROUND SHOCK. THE MEDIA ALSO REPORTS THAT THE UNIDENTIFIED RENAULT SEEN IN FRONT OF THE BUILDING WAS A POLICE BACK-UP CAR. OTHERS CITE THE TIGHT INTERNAL SECURITY, MANY SHARP METAL SHARDS ON THE SCENE, AND EXTENSIVE DAMAGE TO SURROUNDING BUILDINGS AS EVIDENCE OF A CAR BOMB, WHICH REMAINS THE PRINCIPAL SUSPECTED MEANS OF DELIVERY.

RESPONSES TO TRAGEDY

5. CHARGE DELIVERED PRESIDENT CLINTON'S LETTER TO PRESIDENT MENEM AND SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER'S LETTER TO MINISTER DI TELLA JULY 19. WE ARE ALSO RECOMMENDING A PRESIDENTIAL LETTER OF CONDOLENCE TO THE LAY LEADER OF ARGENTINA'S JEWISH COMMUNITY, DAIA PRESIDENT RUBEN BERAJA (SEPTTEL). PRESIDENT MENEM VISITED TWO OF THE

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 04726 02 OF 02 192010Z
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CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BUENOS 04726 02 OF 02 192010Z

HOSPITALS WHERE THE VICTIMS OF THE ATTACK ARE BEING
TREATED THE EVENING OF JULY 19. HE ALSO REPORTEDLY
TOLD ISRAELI PREMIER YITZHAK RABIN EARLIER IN THE DAY
THAT THE AUTHORS OF THE BOMBING ARE "BEASTS THAT DO
NOT DESERVE TO LIVE IN SOCIETY" AND THAT "(ARGENTINA)
DOES NOT DESERVE" THIS BRUTAL ATTACK. HE INSISTED
THAT THE PERPETRATORS OF THE ATTACK CAME FROM OUTSIDE

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ARGENTINA AND THAT THEY WERE "PROFESSIONALS." A U.S. INTERAGENCY TEAM ARRIVES JULY 20 TO ASSIST LOCAL INVESTIGATORS; AN OFFICIAL ISRAELI TEAM IS EXPECTED JULY 19.

GOA COUNTER-MEASURES

6. FEDERAL JUDGE JUAN JOSE GALEANO AND PROSECUTOR GERMAN MOLDES WILL LEAD THE INVESTIGATION OF THE BOMBING. MENEM HAS CALLED FOR THE REINSTATEMENT OF THE DEATH PENALTY FOR TERRORIST ACTS, AND MADE ANOTHER PITCH FOR THE CREATION OF A STATE SECRETARIAT FOR INTERNAL SECURITY, AN EARLIER PROPOSAL WHICH PROVOKED A GREAT DEAL OF CRITICISM FROM OPPOSITION PARTIES. MENEM ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT AN IRAQI CITIZEN (NFI) CARRYING AN OUT-DATED BRAZILIAN PASSPORT WAS DETAINED AT THE PASO DE LOS LIBRES BORDER CROSSING BETWEEN CORRIENTES PROVINCE AND SOUTHERN BRAZIL. TWO OTHER PERSONS, A GERMAN AND AN IRANIAN, WERE DETAINED BRIEFLY AT EZEIZA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT JULY 18, BUT WERE LATER ALLOWED TO BOARD A FLIGHT FOR BRAZIL. ACCORDING TO GENDARMERIA SOURCES, BORDER CONTROLS ARE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BUENOS 04726 02 OF 02 192010Z
STILL VERY STRICT, BUT THERE IS MOVEMENT OF LEGITIMATE TRAVELERS IN AND OUT OF ARGENTINA. AT THE SAME TIME, THE MEDIA IS NOW SPECULATING ABOUT THE POSSIBLE INVOLVEMENT IN TERRORIST ACTIVITIES OF PEOPLE OF MIDDLE EASTERN ORIGIN LIVING IN THE TRI-BORDER AREA (BRAZIL, PARAGUAY, ARGENTINA) NEAR IGUAZU FALLS.

POSSIBLE U.S. CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRY

7. CONGRESSMAN TOM LANTOS CALLED THE CHARGE ON THE BOMBING JULY 19, SAYING HE PLANNED TO CONVENE A HEARING ON THE SUBJECT IN THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS, WHICH HE CHAIRS. THE CONGRESSMAN SAID HE WOULD BE CONTACTING GOA AUTHORITIES AND MEMBERS OF THE ARGENTINE JEWISH COMMITTEE WHO MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN TESTIFYING. THE CHARGE GAVE LANTOS AN UPDATE ON THE BOMBING AND TOLD HIM THAT U.S. EXPERTS WERE ENROUTE TO ASSIST IN THE INVESTIGATION. BUENOS AIRES CENTER-LEFT DAILY "PAGINA 12" CARRIED A STORY JULY 18 QUOTING INM ASSISTANT

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SECRETARY ROBERT GELBARD'S MARCH 1994 COMMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT ARGENTINA'S BORDERS WERE WIDE OPEN TO MIDDLE EASTERN TERRORISTS WHO CANNOT ACCEPT THE PEACE PROCESS, AND THAT ARGENTINA WAS A PRIME TARGET FOR THEIR ATTACKS.

COMMENT

ARGENTINES ARE BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND THAT,
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PAGE 04 BUENOS 04726 02 OF 02 192010Z
DESPITE THE MANY SIMILARITIES IN THE AMIA BOMBING AND THE MARCH 1992 DESTRUCTION OF THE ISRAELI EMBASSY, THERE IS A FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE. WHEREAS THE EMBASSY BOMBING WAS SEEN AS AN ATTACK ON A FOREIGN ENTITY, SOME OF WHOSE VICTIMS HAPPENED TO BE ARGENTINE, AMIA AND DAIA ARE SEEN CLEARLY AS ARGENTINE ORGANIZATIONS. ALL OF THE VICTIMS OF THE AMIA ATTACK APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN ARGENTINES, REGARDLESS OF THEIR RELIGION. SOME ARE NOT JEWS. MOREOVER, THE HISTORIC ORIGINS OF AMIA AND DAIA IN ARGENTINA LONG PREDATE THE CREATION OF ISRAEL. THIS REALIZATION INCREASES THE ANGER AND FRUSTRATION THAT PEOPLE EXPRESS OVER THE LATEST ATTACK ON THE JEWISH COMMUNITY HERE, AND THE GOVERNMENT'S DIFFICULTY IN IDENTIFYING THE ATTACKERS AND PREVENTING THEM FROM STRIKING AGAIN.
GODARD

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